

МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЕ ОБЩЕНИЕ

CROSS – CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Аннотация: В данной статье культура рассматривается как система ценностей, верований, убеждений, традиций и институтов, которые их выражают. При этом основной целью являясь объединение общества в единое целое для обеспечения идентичности и преемственности. Центр культуры конституируется картиной мира или общим пониманием вселенной и своего места в ней. Можно выделить два компонента культуры – физический (видимый) и невидимый (ценности, верования, картина мира). Понимание роли языка, социальной организации и невербальных кодов общения крайне важно для успешной межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: культура, межкультурная коммуникация, бизнес.

Abstract: Culture is an integrated system of beliefs, of values, of customs, and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs so as to bind a society together and give it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity. At its center is a world-view or a general understanding of the nature of the universe and one's place in it. There are two broad components of culture. The first is the physical / visible component – these are things we can see and touch and include things such as language, homes, behaviors, and foods. Then we have the non-visible component to culture – these are values, beliefs, and world views. Understanding cross-cultural communications is vital for any company with a diverse workforce or with plans of conducting business globally. Understanding of language, social organization, and non-verbal methods of communication are all critical elements for successful cross-cultural communication. At the center of a culture is a world-view. From this world-view flow both standards of judgment or values and standards of conduct. It is important that people communicating cross cultures either for business or personal reasons practice patience and work to increase their knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

Key words: culture, cross-cultural communication, business

What is culture? Culture is a concept that is always on our lips but is very hard to define. There is a lot of talk about culture and many things are attributed to and blamed on culture. A search of the literature reveals there are more than 300 definitions of culture but no matter how culture is defined, all scholars who study culture and create these definitions agree – culture is not genetic, it is learned.

Culture is man-made ways of responding to his environment in the task of living their daily lives; a patterned way in which people do things and holds people together over a span of time. At its center is a world-view or a general understanding of the nature of the universe and one's place in it. Culture is an integrated system of beliefs, of values, of customs, and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs so as to bind a society together and give it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity. Cultural diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, religion, educational background, and much more...not just nationality. It is critical for today's global business environment to educate the workforce regarding the importance, benefits and inevitability of cultural diversity and how to communicate successfully across cultures.

There are two broad components of culture. The first is the physical / visible component – these are things that can be seen and touched and include things such as language, homes, behaviors, and foods. Then there is the non-visible component to culture – these are values, beliefs, and world views. These non-visible components are deeply integrated patterns of life that are transmitted from generation to generation. One must always remember that there NO cultureless societies. It is well recognized that cultural factors act as invisible barriers in international business communications. Understanding cultural differences is one of the most significant skills for people and companies to develop in order to have a competitive advantage in international business.

Cross-cultural communication has become increasingly important to companies due to the growth of global business, technology and the Internet. Understanding cross-cultural communications is vital for any company with a diverse workforce or with plans of conducting business globally. The communication process in international business involves many variables, each of which can affect perceptions on the part of both parties. These include language, environment, technology, social organization, social history and mores, and nonverbal communication behavior. By assessing the roles these variables play in business communication, we can improve our ability to convey messages and conduct business with individuals in a wide range of cultures. There are beneficial facts about communication in a general that are important to remember: 1) Everything that people do communicates. 2) The goal of communication is more than just the transfer of information. 3) The communication process is more complicated than people think. 4) The communication process is dynamic.

Cross-cultural communication involves the additional understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate, behave, and perceive the world around them. As such, one does well to keep in mind that with cross-cultural communications the sender of the message and the receiver of the message are from different cultures. Cross-cultural communicators should undergo a study of their own cultural beliefs and values to deepen or even open awareness of their own cultural attitudes and beliefs and of course obtain some cultural knowledge of the people they will be communicating with in order to decrease confusion and increase the effectiveness of their communication.

Among the most often cited barriers to conflict-free cross-cultural business communication is the use of different languages. Although English is regarded as the common international language of business, not every business globally uses English on a daily basis. Non-native English speakers may have more difficulty when communicating in English and may not fully be able to express or understand certain directions, levels of urgency or communicating issues or concerns. And, international business is not always done in English. It is difficult to underestimate the importance that an understanding of linguistic differences plays in international business communication. Given this reality, business consultants counsel clients to take the necessary steps to enlist the services of a good translator. Language failures between cultures typically fall into three categories: 1) gross translation problems; 2) subtle distinctions from language to language; and 3) culturally-based variations among speakers of the same language. Gross translation errors, though frequent, may be less likely to cause conflict between parties than other language difficulties for two reasons. Indeed, the nonsensical nature of many gross translation errors often raises warning flags that are hard to miss. The parties can then backtrack and revisit the communication area that prompted the error. Even if they are easily detected in most cases, however, gross translation errors waste time and wear on the patience of the parties involved. Additionally, for some, such errors could imply a form of disrespect for the party into whose language the message is translated. Attitudes toward accents and dialects can also create barriers in international business communication. The view that a particular accent suggests loyalty or familiarity to a nation or region is widespread in many languages. The use of Parisian French in Quebec, of Mexican Spanish in Spain, or sub continental Indian English in the United States are all noticeable, and may suggest a lack of familiarity, even if the user is fluent.

Social organization, as it affects the workplace, is often culturally determined. Ethnocentrism means seeing one's own culture as the center of the

universe and seeing other cultures as insignificant or even inferior and successful cross-cultural communications will take great measure to eliminate this belief. One must take care not to assume that the view held in one's own culture is universal on such issues as nepotism and kinship ties, educational values, class structure, job status and economic stratification, religious ties, political affiliation, gender differences, racism and other prejudices, attitudes toward work, and recreational or work institutions. All of these areas have far-reaching implications for business practice. Choosing employees based on résumés, for example, is considered a primary means of selection in the United States, Canada, and much of northern Europe—all nations with comparatively weak concepts of familial relationships and kinship ties. In these cultures, nepotism is seen as subjective and likely to protect less qualified workers through familial intervention. By contrast, it would seem anywhere from mildly to highly inappropriate to suggest to members of many Arabic, central African, Latin American, or southern European cultures to skip over hiring relatives to hire a stranger. For people in these cultures, nepotism both fulfills personal obligations and ensures a predictable level of trust and accountability. The fact that a stranger appears to be better qualified based on a superior résumé and a relatively brief interview would not necessarily affect that belief. Finally, it is often difficult to rid business communication of a judgmental bias when social organization varies markedly. For example, those from the United States may find it difficult to remain neutral on cultural class structures that do not reflect American values of equality. For instance, the socially determined inferior role of women in much of the Islamic world, or of lower castes in India—to name just two—may puzzle or anger Western citizens. Nevertheless, if the Western business-person cannot eliminate the judgmental condemnation from his or her business communication, then they cannot expect to function effectively in that society. An individual may personally believe that a country's social system is inefficient or incorrect. Nevertheless, in the way that individual conducts business on a daily basis, it is necessary to work within the restraints of that culture to succeed. One may choose not to do business with people from such a culture, but one cannot easily impose one's own values on them and expect to succeed in the business arena.

Among the most markedly varying dimensions of intercultural communication is nonverbal behavior. Knowledge of a culture conveyed through what a person says represents only a portion of what that person has communicated. Indeed, body language, clothing choices, eye contact, touching behavior, respect of time and conceptions of personal space all communicate

information, no matter what the culture. Companies must train employees in the correct way to handle nonverbal communications so that other cultures are not offended. For example, Americans tend to wave their hand and use a finger to point when giving nonverbal direction and this is considered normal. However, extreme gesturing is considered rude in some cultures including the Japanese culture. Again, Americans view direct eye contact as a good thing and it is seen as a reflection of honesty and straightforwardness. However, in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, prolonged eye contact can be viewed as rude and aggressive.

At the center of a culture is a world-view. From this world-view flow both standards of judgment or values and standards of conduct. A culture's values are its ideas about what is good, right, fair, and just. Americans share the common value of the "American work ethic," which encourages hard work. Other common American values include accomplishment, material success, problem - solving, reliance on science and technology, democracy, patriotism, charity, freedom, equality and justice, individualism, responsibility, and accountability. The Chinese value the importance of the family, the hierarchical structure of social life, the cultivation of morality and self-restraint, and the emphasis on hard work and achievement. People bring their culture and values into all personal interactions and it is inevitable that they will influence their communications across different cultures. Relations between individuals, between the sexes and the generations, within the community and with those outside the community are standards to conduct that will also affect cross-cultural communications. People act according to the values of their own culture.

Communicating across cultures is tricky. With today's internet and technology, one should take the time to learn about a culture where they may travel or conduct business. Any mistakes or misunderstandings should not be caused by a failure to prepare. It is important that people communicating cross cultures either for business or personal reasons practice patience and work to increase their knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

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